

OUTLINE 1

A DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT AND A DANGEROUS CHOICE: JONAH 1.1-3

I. Introduction to the Book of Jonah

Everyone knows the story of Jonah and the whale – or big fish, as the book of Jonah puts it – but this episode in the life of Jonah carries deeper significance than we sometimes realize. Jonah is a rebellious prophet who refuses to complete the assignment that the LORD gives to him.

A. Overview of the Book of Jonah

The book of Jonah is set forth in two halves, and each of these halves begins with the same statement: ‘The Word of the LORD came to Jonah’ (1.1; 3.1).

B. Outline of the Book of Jonah

C. The Book of Jonah Is Different from Other Prophetic Books

1. Jonah is the only prophetic book that has no title or introduction.
2. Another characteristic that makes Jonah different is that Jonah is entirely a story about the prophet.
3. Another unique quality of Jonah is its unceasing intensity. Most everything in Jonah is big and intense. The Hebrew word ‘big’ (*gadol*) is found fourteen times in the book of Jonah.
4. Unlike the mission of other prophets, Jonah’s assignment requires him to travel to a foreign country where he will deliver a message of judgment.
5. Jonah is given a second commission. Jonah is the only prophet who needed to have his assignment repeated a second time.
6. Jonah is the only prophet who does not mention God in his preaching.

II. A Difficult Assignment (1.1)

A. The first half of the book (chapters 1 and 2) tells of God’s assignment to Jonah and Jonah’s refusal to obey.

B. The difficult assignment causes tension between Jonah and God.

C. Jonah’s Assignment comes by the Word of the Lord.

1. The coming of the prophetic ‘word’ (*da'var*) is a powerful revelatory experience in the life of a prophet.
2. The Word of the Lord is sometimes visual.
3. The Word of the Lord is more than speech or conversation; it is an event.

4. The Word of the Lord is not Jonah's word; it is God's Word.

D. Like Jonah, we may be recipients of the Word of the Lord. Since the Day of Pentecost, the Church has been a Spirit-filled prophetic community that proclaims the message of Jesus.

III. The Assignment Is Given to Jonah

A. The name 'Jonah' ('dove') symbolizes gentleness and beauty (Song 5.2) and timidity (Hos. 11.11).

B. 'Amittai' means 'true' or 'faithful'; therefore, Jonah's name suggests that he might be a gentle, timid, but faithful prophet and that perhaps he will offer himself on behalf of others.

C. Jonah was an experienced prophet.

D. Jonah preached grace to a wicked king.

IV. Jonah's Assignment Is to Go to Nineveh (1.2)

A. Nineveh is a major city in the Assyrian Empire and a bitter enemy of Israel.

B. Although God spares Nineveh for a time, he would later execute complete judgment upon the wicked city.

C. Nineveh is the enemy, but Nineveh is not the real point of the story.

D. What is most important is the response by both God and Jonah to the repentance of Nineveh.

E. The Lord commands Jonah to 'arise, and go' to the big city of Nineveh and 'cry out' against it because of its evil.

F. The cries of the prophets are usually directed against the sins of Israel.

V. A Dangerous Decision (1.3)

A. For some reason, Jonah decides to disregard the clear command that God had given him. In an attempt to escape the 'presence of the Lord', he flees westward toward Tarshish instead of going eastward to Nineveh.

B. Although God lays upon his prophets a powerful calling, he does not force them into compliance. The message that is carried by the prophet is called a 'burden'.

C. Jonah resists his assignment, but that does not mean that he takes God lightly.

D. Jonah not only resists his assignment, he refuses to talk to God.

E. No other prophet refused their assignment like Jonah. Other prophets resisted God initially, but no other prophet turned and ran away.

F. Other prophets offer objections, but Jonah does not protest. Other prophets wrestle with God, but Jonah does not wrestle.

G. Jonah quickly found a ship that would take him away from his assignment. Jonah learned that disobedience comes easily for the one whose heart is rebellious.

H. Jonah's flight is highlighted in verse 3 by the repetition of the phrases 'to Tarshish' and 'from the presence of the Lord'.

I. Tarshish was as far from Nineveh as Jonah could go.

J. Why did Jonah make this dangerous choice to flee from his prophetic assignment? He must have had a strong reason for giving up his prophetic ministry and running to a city where he would have no friends, family, or church.

K. Can Jonah escape the presence of God? Of course not.

VI. Conclusion

Jonah was given a difficult assignment, and he chose to disobey. We too are faced with difficult choices.

OUTLINE 2

DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS STORMY EFFECTS: JONAH 1.4-16

I. Introduction

In the previous lesson, Jonah flees toward the distant city of Tarshish. In this lesson we follow Jonah as he attempts to escape the presence of the LORD.

II. Disobedience Brings Stormy Effects (1.4-5)

- A. God hurls a mighty wind (*ruach*) that stirs up a raging storm, and the ship is in danger of sinking.
- B. Several places in Scripture, the word 'tempest' is used as a symbol of God's anger and judgment (Jer. 23.19; Isa. 29.6).
- C. Since Jonah refuses to talk to God, the storm is God's method of communication. Have you considered that the storm in your life may have been created by God himself? Throughout Scripture, God finds a multitude of ways to discipline and confront his erring children.
- D. Jonah's disobedience endangers not only himself but also the sailors and their ship. It is clear that our disobedience to God results in misery and suffering not only to ourselves but also to others.
- E. Jonah, however, is not yet suffering – he is asleep. He had gone down below deck to the remotest part of the ship, and had fallen into a deep sleep.

III. Disobedience Rebuked (1.6)

- A. The ship is in danger, but Jonah sleeps. The captain of the ship does not understand how Jonah can sleep through the storm.
- B. Jonah was sleeping during a time of confusion – the sailors were running to and fro trying to save the ship. Everyone was praying except Jonah.
- C. Jonah was sleeping during a time of great danger – the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging, but still Jonah slept.
- D. Jonah was sleeping when he should have been awake. Of all people, he should have been awake and praying.
- E. Our times require a praying church. Our times demand a church that is full of the Holy Spirit and power.
- F. The captain pleads with Jonah to pray, but Jonah did not pray.

IV. Disobedience Revealed (1.7-10)

- A. While the captain is busy rebuking the prophet, the ship's crew decides to cast lots in an effort to determine the cause of the storm.
- B. The crew fire a volley of questions at Jonah, in order to learn more about the reasons for the storm.
- C. Jonah seems willing to speak about God but still he is unwilling to speak to God.
- D. Jonah's statement of faith, in spite of its brevity, is important in its content. The sea and the storm that is in the sea are in the Lord's control.
- E. After Jonah says that he fears the Lord we read that the sailors 'feared greatly'; literally, 'they feared a great fear'.
- F. Jonah tells the sailors; why does he refuse to tell the Lord?
- G. Are there times when we talk to people, but we do not talk to God?

V. Disobedience Punished (1.11-16)

- A. Jonah confessed that he is the cause of the storm; therefore, the ship's ask him, 'What must we do to you that the sea may be quiet for us?'
- B. It is important that Jonah does not volunteer to leap or dive into the sea, for that would be suicide, an act that is strictly forbidden to the Jews. Jonah will not take responsibility for solving his own problem.
- C. We must deal with our problems and not push them off onto someone else. Paul tells us that every one must carry their own load (Gal. 6.5).
- D. Jonah is willing to die in his rebellion, but he is not willing to die to his rebellion. Jonah continues to be stubborn, even in the face of a life-threatening storm.
- E. Even though Jonah asks the sailors to cast him overboard, they are unwilling to do so without first waging a renewed battle against the wind and waves.
- F. The sailors quickly realize that they will be unable to reach the shore, and they cry out, 'Please, the Lord, please do not let us perish for taking this man's life, and do not lay upon us innocent blood'. It is ironic that the prophet stands by silently while the pagan sailors pray to the prophet's God.
- G. Just as the Lord's hurling of the wind onto the sea generated the tempest, the crew's hurling of Jonah onto the sea caused the sea to stop its 'raging', a rage that symbolizes the anger of the Lord (Mic. 7.9).
- H. The hypocrisy of Jonah is highlighted by the behavior of the sailors. It seems that we are being challenged to emulate these non-Israelite sailors rather than the Israelite prophet.

VI. Conclusion

Jonah's disobedience to God brought about a storm in his life that threatened not only Jonah but also those around him. In spite of the storm, Jonah continued to stubbornly resist God even to the point of dying in his rebellion. While the sailors called out to the LORD for help, the fleeing prophet kept silent and never prayed.

OUTLINE 3

A BIG FISH AND A SONG OF PRAISE:

JONAH 1.17-2.10

I. Introduction

In this third episode of Jonah's story, we learn of the three-day ordeal of Jonah within the belly of the fish (1.17–2.10). After three days in the belly of the fish, God commands the fish to regurgitate Jonah onto the dry land; and the fish obeys the Word of the LORD.

II. A Surprising Deliverance (1.17)

- A. Since the death of Jonah is not the Lord's objective, he prepares a big fish to swallow Jonah, and to keep him from drowning. Jonah's story shows that in the face of rebellion God's grace pursues his servants and persists in calling them to mission.
- B. In more ways than one, Jonah's confinement in the fish for 'three days and three nights' underscores the harshness of his ordeal from both a physical and emotional perspective.
- C. While it is true that the fish saves Jonah from drowning, the fish itself is only a slightly less threatening environment than the open sea.

III. Deliverance Produces Thanksgiving (2.1-9)

- A. Jonah speaks. The storm did not provoke Jonah to pray. The sailors could not force Jonah to pray; but from the stomach of the great fish, Jonah prays.
- B. Jonah gives thanks. We expect to hear Jonah crying out to the Lord for help; but instead, we hear a prayer of thanksgiving that reports Jonah's cries after the fact.
- C. In light of the fact that *sheol*, the abode of the dead, sometimes symbolizes death itself (e.g. 1 Sam. 2.6; Ps. 18.5), the bringing back of a person from *sheol* is a metaphor that represents a near-death experience (Pss. 18.5; 30.3; 49.15; 86.13; and 116.3).
- D. Jonah acknowledges God's judgment. Jonah acknowledges that although the sailors cast him into the sea, the Lord bears responsibility for the deed. God often uses human agents, situations, and circumstances to discipline his people.
- E. Jonah describes the sensation of being carried and tossed about by the 'current', the 'breakers' and the 'waves', all of which are under the control of the Lord.
- F. Jonah speaks in faith. Jonah, convinced that the Lord has heard his prayer (v. 2), declares confidently that he will return to the temple, that is, to the presence of God. In the midst of a hopeless situation, Jonah makes a statement of great faith – 'I will look again upon God's temple'.

- G. Jonah shares his pain. Jonah felt imprisoned and shackled as the depths of the sea surrounded him and as sea weed wrapped around his head.
- H. Jonah goes down. Sinking deeper and deeper in the sea, Jonah tells us that he went down 'to the foundations of the mountains'. Yet when Jonah reached bottom, God brought him up from the pit (2.6) and placed him on dry land (2.10).
- I. Jonah remembers God. At his lowest point of despair, Jonah 'remembered' the Lord; and although Jonah was far from Jerusalem, his prayer reached the Lord in his 'holy temple'.
- J. Jonah rejects idolatry. In light of his experience, Jonah rebukes those who practice vanities. The word 'vanities' refers to empty, vain practices (Jer. 2.5; 2 Kgs 17.15; Prov. 13.11), and by extension can refer to vain idols (Deut. 32.21).
- K. Jonah promises to be faithful. Unlike those who would act unfaithfully, Jonah promises to serve the Lord with sacrifices and with the fulfillment of his vows.
- L. The thanksgiving prayer of Jonah ends with the powerful assertion that 'salvation is of the Lord'.
- M. Jonah's statement that 'salvation is of the Lord' also testifies to his own experience of the Lord's mercy and grace. Jonah had fled from the Lord, but still the Lord saved him.

IV. God Grants Jonah a Second Chance (2.10)

- A. As soon as Jonah finishes his prayer, the Lord speaks to the fish, which regurgitates Jonah upon the dry land.
- B. The Lord is moved to action by Jonah's prayer. Apparently, God believes that Jonah is now ready to go to Nineveh.

V. Conclusion to Jonah 1-2

The first half of the book of Jonah (chs. 1–2) begins with a word from God and ends with a word from God. First, God commands Jonah to go to Nineveh (1.1), but Jonah disobeys; and second, God commands the big fish to regurgitate Jonah (2.10), and the fish obeys. Between these two commands from God, we follow the flight of the rebellious Jonah as he descends into the depths of despair and as God raises him up. The first half of the book concludes with the grace of God being extended to Jonah.

OUTLINE 4

A REPENTANT CITY AND A MERCIFUL GOD: JONAH 3.1-10

I. Introduction

After delivering Jonah from the belly of the fish, the LORD repeats his assignment. Jonah is commanded to go to Nineveh. We hope that Jonah has been transformed by his disciplinary experience. We hope that Jonah now trusts that the LORD knows what he is doing. We hope that Jonah will now obey joyfully, even though he may not fully understand the reasons for his assignment.

II. The New Opportunity for Obedience (3.1-2)

- A. As soon as the great fish regurgitates Jonah onto the dry land, the Lord speaks to him a second time.
- B. Jonah's assignment is repeated. The command is altered just a bit, enough that we might wonder about the reasons for the changes.
- C. As a prophet of God, Jonah does not have the option of choosing the message or changing the message.
- D. Without a word of response to the Lord, Jonah rises up and travels to Nineveh where he proclaims a message of impending doom. In essence, his message is 'The end is near'.

III. The Short Sermon (3.3-4)

- A. Jonah goes to Nineveh. Like before, Jonah does not speak to God; he only acts. Therefore, we have no indication of his attitude towards his assignment.
- B. The words, 'exceedingly great city' carry a double meaning. The phrase could just as well be translated 'a great city belonging to God'.
- C. The Jews considered Jerusalem to be the 'city of God', but they also proclaimed that 'The earth belongs to the Lord and all that fills it, the world and all who dwell in it' (Pss. 24.1; 50.12; 89.11).
- D. It is surprising that Jonah does not use the standard prophetic messenger formula, 'Thus says the Lord'. In fact, he does not mention the name of the Lord at all.
- E. The message of Jonah could be translated, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will turn around', or even 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be converted'!

IV. The Amazing Turn (3.5-9)

- A. Nineveh repents. After only one day, the entire city of Nineveh believes God and repents of their wickedness. God's word is powerful to change lives.

- B. Jonah's preaching generates a three-fold response from the people of Nineveh. First, they 'believed' God. Second, they 'proclaimed a fast'. Third, they 'put on sackcloth' as an outward sign of their heartfelt mourning.
- C. The king of Nineveh repents. When word of the events reaches the king of Nineveh, he lays aside his robes and sits in sackcloth and ashes.
- D. The king proclaims a fast. The decree of the king lends authority and legitimacy to the revival.
- E. Violence is confessed. The king orders the people to 'cry mightily' to God and to 'turn' from their evil and violence.
- F. In his initial call to Jonah, the Lord had characterized Nineveh as an evil city, but now the king's decree describes the sin of Nineveh with a more specific term – violence.
- G. The king's edict of repentance applies to the Ninevites and to the Israelites and to us. In our day, violence is rampant.
- H. The king hopes for mercy. The repentance of the Ninevites is aimed at moving God to pity so that he will change his mind and not destroy the city.

V. The God of Grace (3.10)

- A. The Lord repents. The repentance of Nineveh makes a deep impression upon the Lord. In a surprising turn of events, he responds to their change of heart with his own change of heart, choosing not to bring upon them the judgment that he had threatened.
- B. While Nineveh was not 'turned over' to destructive forces, it was 'turned over' in its attitudes and commitments. The Lord is free to express his anger toward human wickedness, but he is also free to change his anger to mercy.

VI. Conclusion

If we should find ourselves facing the displeasure of God (cf. the churches of Revelation 2–3), we must follow the example of Nineveh, turning to God with all of our heart and believing that God will forgive and restore us to his fellowship. Also, God's mercy upon Nineveh should encourage the Church to be deeply involved in mission and evangelism both locally and globally. We must believe that even the most wicked and depraved people can be redeemed by the grace of God.

OUTLINE 5

JONAH AND THE GOD OF GRACE: JONAH 4.1-11

I. Introduction

In chapter 4, Jonah finally reveals his long hidden motive for fleeing his assignment, and the conflict between God and Jonah is pushed into the foreground.

II. Angry with God (4.1-5)

- A. The Lord's forgiveness of Nineveh displeased Jonah greatly and he is very angry.
- B. Although he is angry that Nineveh is saved, Jonah knows that the fate of Nineveh lies in the hands of the Lord; therefore, Jonah's anger is really directed at the Lord.
- C. Jonah wants God to smite the enemy; he wants justice to prevail, but God hears Nineveh's prayers of repentance and his heart is touched by the humility of the Ninevites who fasted and prayed and mourned over their violence.
- D. Jonah knew that when he preached in Nineveh, the people would have an opportunity to be saved, but if he did not preach, then they would have no basis for repentance. That is why he ran from his assignment.
- E. Jonah himself had preached about the grace and mercy of God. He had prophesied to King Jeroboam II that the king would be successful in spite of the fact that he was an evil king who showed no signs of repentance.
- F. Jonah is more comfortable with God's punishment than with God's mercy.
- G. Jesus' parables tell us that established religion always prefers justice over mercy, because justice is safe, predictable, controllable, and easily understood. Mercy is unpredictable, ambiguous, and leads to change.
- H. Like many of us, Jonah was resistant to change. He was not open to what God wanted to do in Nineveh!
- I. Jonah is so angry that he prays to die. He no longer desires to live in a world where his enemies are offered redemption and where evil is so quickly pardoned.
- J. Even though Jonah is clearly in the wrong, we must appreciate the freedom that God gives him to complain.
- K. Jonah is not the first to wrestle with God. We must wrestle with God in order to know God and to be like God.
- L. God values Jonah as a person, not just as an instrument of prophecy. God takes seriously Jonah and his theological concerns.

M. Jonah does not wish to continue the dialogue, nor does he seem to be appreciative of God's personal attention.

III. God Defends His Grace (4.6-11)

- A. Jonah continues to resist any dialogue with God, but God persists in reaching out to Jonah.
- B. In order to get to the root of Jonah's anger, God provides comfort to Jonah and then takes away that comfort.
- C. The large leaves of the plant shade Jonah from the heat of the sun and he rejoices 'greatly' because of the plant.
- D. Once again God questions the validity of Jonah's anger. Jonah's silence and his wish to die are his way of avoiding his anger and frustration.
- E. Jonah's evil attitude toward the mercy of God demonstrates that the presence of charismatic gifts such as prophecy does not guarantee complete spiritual maturity.
- F. The message is clear – if Jonah is deeply concerned about a mere plant, then how can he condemn the Lord for being concerned about a city of 120,000 persons and their livestock?
- G. The inhabitants of Nineveh are characterized by the Lord as 'human beings who do not know their right hand from their left', a description that may refer to the young children but which more likely describes figuratively the Ninevites lack of instruction in the laws of God and their lack of spiritual discernment.
- H. The final words of the book of Jonah – 'and many cattle' – are puzzling. The Lord's mention of the cattle would remind Jonah of the violent Assyrian (Ninevite) incursions into Israel, which resulted in the capture and deportation of women, children and livestock.
- I. If God cares for the sparrow, the raven and the grass – and the cattle – how much more does he care for his people!

IV. The Message of Jonah

- A. God's gracious response to repentance has long been regarded as a dominant theme of the story.
- B. The only motif that is present in every part of the story is the conflict between Jonah and God.
- C. The events surrounding Nineveh are just the setting for getting to the real issue, which is Jonah's theological struggle with God. Jonah, though an adult, is undergoing a re-

education, a painful process of theological formation (sanctification), and he struggles against the yoke.

V. Conclusion

The book of Jonah focuses on the interrelationships between Jonah, the LORD, the sailors and the Ninevites, yet the beauty of the story is that we may find ourselves in the place of any of the characters at a given time. In the end, we come face to face with the God of amazing Grace.

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4. Unlike the mission of other prophets, Jonah’s assignment requires him to travel to a _____ country where he will deliver a message of judgment.
5. Jonah is given a _____ commission. Jonah is the only prophet who needed to have his assignment repeated a second time.
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II. A Difficult Assignment (verse 1)

A. The first half of the book (chapters 1 and 2) tells of God’s assignment to Jonah and Jonah’s _____ to obey.

B. The difficult assignment causes _____ between Jonah and God.

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2. The Word of the Lord is sometimes _____.

3. The Word of the Lord is more than speech or conversation; it is an _____.

4. The Word of the Lord is not Jonah's word; it is God's Word. The Word does not _____ in Jonah, and he does not own it or control it.

D. Like Jonah, we may be recipients of the Word of the Lord. Since the Day of Pentecost, the Church has been a Spirit-filled _____ community that proclaims the message of Jesus.

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A. The name 'Jonah' ('dove') symbolizes _____ and beauty (Song 5.2) and timidity (Hos. 11.11).

B. 'Amittai' means 'true' or 'faithful'; therefore, Jonah's name suggests that he might be a _____, timid, but faithful prophet and that perhaps he will offer himself on behalf of others.

C. Jonah was an _____ prophet.

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A. Nineveh is a major city in the _____ Empire and a bitter enemy of Israel.

B. Although God spares _____ for a time, he would later execute complete judgment upon the wicked city.

C. Nineveh is the _____, but Nineveh is not the real point of the story.

D. What is most important in the book of Jonah is the _____ by both God and Jonah to the repentance of Nineveh.

E. The Lord commands Jonah to 'arise, and go' to the big city of Nineveh and 'cry out' against it because of its _____.

F. The cries of the prophets are usually directed against the sins of _____.

V. A Dangerous Decision (verse 3)

A. For some reason, Jonah decides to _____ the clear command that God had given him. In an attempt to escape the 'presence of the Lord', he flees westward toward Nineveh instead of going eastward to Nineveh.

B. Although God lays upon his prophets a powerful calling, he does not force them into compliance. The message that is carried by the prophet is called a _____.

C. Jonah _____ his assignment, but that does not mean that he takes God lightly.

D. Jonah not only resists his assignment, he refuses to _____ to God.

- E. No other prophet _____ their assignment like Jonah. Other prophets resisted God initially, but no other prophet turned and ran away.
- F. Other prophets offer _____, but Jonah does not protest. Other prophets wrestled with God, but Jonah does not wrestle.
- G. Jonah quickly found a ship that would take him away from his assignment. Jonah learned that _____ comes easily for the one whose heart is rebellious.
- H. Jonah's flight is highlighted in verse 3 by the repetition of the phrases _____ and 'from the presence of the Lord'.
- I. Tarshish was as far from _____ as Jonah could go.
- J. Why did Jonah make this dangerous choice to _____ from his prophetic assignment?
- K. Can Jonah _____ the presence of God? Of course not.

VI. Conclusion

Jonah was given a difficult assignment, and he chose to disobey. We too are faced with difficult choices. What path will we choose?

HANDOUT 2

DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS STORMY EFFECTS: JONAH 1.4-16

I. Introduction

In the previous lesson, Jonah flees toward the distant city of _____. In this lesson we follow Jonah as he attempts to escape the presence of the LORD.

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- A. God hurls a mighty _____ that stirs up a raging storm, and the ship is in danger of sinking.
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- C. Since Jonah refuses to talk to God, the _____ is God's method of communication. Have you considered that the storm in your life may have been created by God himself? Throughout Scripture, God finds a multitude of ways to discipline and confront his erring children.
- D. Jonah's disobedience endangers not only himself but also the sailors and their ship. It is clear that our _____ to God results in misery and suffering not only to ourselves but also to others.
- E. Jonah, however, is not yet suffering – he is _____. He had gone down below deck to the remotest part of the ship, and had fallen into a deep sleep.

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- A. The ship is in danger, but Jonah sleeps. The captain of the ship does not understand how Jonah can _____ through the storm.
- B. Jonah was sleeping during a time of _____. The sailors were running to and fro trying to save the ship. Everyone was praying except Jonah.
- C. Jonah was sleeping during a time of great _____ – the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging, but still Jonah slept.
- D. Jonah was sleeping when he should have been _____. Of all people, he should have been awake and praying.
- E. Our times require a _____ church. Our times demand a church that is full of the Holy Spirit and power.
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- E. After Jonah says that he fears the Lord we read that the sailors 'feared _____'; literally, 'they feared a great fear'.
- F. Jonah tells the sailors; why does he refuse to _____ the Lord?
- G. Are there times when we _____ to people, but we do not talk to God?

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- A. Jonah confessed that he is the cause of the _____; and the ship's crew ask him, 'What must we do to you that the sea may be quiet for us?'
- B. It is important that Jonah does not _____ to leap or dive into the sea, for that would be suicide, an act that is strictly forbidden to the Jews. Jonah will not take responsibility for solving his own problem.
- C. We must deal with our _____ and not push them off onto someone else. Paul tells us that every one must carry their own load (Gal. 6.5).
- D. Jonah is willing to die in his rebellion, but he is not willing to die to his rebellion. Jonah continues to be _____, even in the face of a life-threatening storm.
- E. Even though Jonah asks the sailors to cast him overboard, they are _____ to do so without first waging a renewed battle against the wind and waves.
- F. The sailors quickly realize that they will be _____ to reach the shore, and they cry out, 'Please, the Lord, please do not let us perish for taking this man's life, and do not lay upon us innocent blood'. It is ironic that the prophet stands by silently while the pagan sailors pray to the prophet's God.
- G. Just as the Lord's hurling of the _____ onto the sea generated the tempest, the crew's hurling of Jonah onto the sea caused the sea to stop its 'raging', a rage that symbolizes the anger of the Lord (Mic. 7.9).

H. The _____ of Jonah is highlighted by the behavior of the sailors. It seems that we are being challenged to emulate these non-Israelite sailors rather than the Israelite prophet.

VI. Conclusion

In spite of the storm, Jonah continued stubbornly to _____ God even to the point of dying in his rebellion. While the sailors called out to the LORD for help, the fleeing prophet kept silent and never prayed.

HANDOUT 3

A BIG FISH AND A SONG OF PRAISE:

JONAH 1.17-2.10

I. Introduction

In this third episode of Jonah's story, we learn of the three-day ordeal of Jonah within the belly of the fish (1.17–2.10). After three days in the belly of the fish, God commands the fish to regurgitate Jonah onto the dry land; and the fish obeys the Word of the LORD.

II. A Surprising Deliverance (1.17)

- A. Since the _____ of Jonah is not the Lord's objective, he prepares a big fish to swallow Jonah, and to keep him from drowning.
- B. In more ways than one, Jonah's confinement in the fish for 'three days and three nights' underscores the _____ of his ordeal from both a physical and emotional perspective.
- C. While it is true that the fish saves Jonah from drowning, the fish itself is only a slightly less _____ environment than the open sea.

III. Deliverance Produces Thanksgiving (2.1-9)

- A. Jonah speaks. The storm did not provoke Jonah to _____. The sailors could not force Jonah to pray; but from the stomach of the great fish, Jonah prays.
- B. Jonah gives thanks. We expect to hear Jonah crying out to the Lord for help; but instead, we hear a prayer of _____ that reports Jonah's cries after the fact.
- C. In light of the fact that *sheol*, the abode of the dead, sometimes symbolizes death itself (e.g. 1 Sam. 2.6; Ps. 18.5), the bringing back of a person from *sheol* is a metaphor that represents a _____ experience (Pss. 18.5; 30.3; 49.15; 86.13; and 116.3).
- D. Jonah acknowledges that although the sailors cast him into the sea, the Lord bears _____ for the deed.
- E. Jonah describes the sensation of being carried and tossed about by the 'current', the 'breakers' and the 'waves', all of which are under the _____ of the Lord.
- F. Jonah, convinced that the Lord has heard his prayer (v. 2), declares confidently that he will _____ to the temple, that is, to the presence of God. In the midst of a hopeless situation, Jonah makes a statement of great faith – 'I will look again upon God's temple'.

- G. Jonah shares his pain. Jonah felt _____ and shackled as the depths of the sea surrounded him and as sea weed wrapped around his head.
- H. Jonah goes down. Sinking deeper and deeper in the sea, Jonah tells us that he went down 'to the _____ of the mountains'. Yet when Jonah reached bottom, God brought him up from the pit (2.6) and placed him on dry land (2.10).
- I. Jonah remembers God. At his lowest point of despair, Jonah ' _____ ' the Lord; and although Jonah was far from Jerusalem, his prayer reached the Lord in his 'holy temple'.
- J. Jonah rejects idolatry. In light of his experience, Jonah rebukes those who practice _____. The word 'vanities' refers to empty, vain practices (Jer. 2.5; 2 Kgs 17.15; Prov. 13.11), and by extension can refer to vain idols (Deut. 32.21).
- K. Jonah promises to be faithful. Unlike those who would act unfaithfully, Jonah promises to serve the Lord with _____ and with the fulfillment of his vows.
- L. The thanksgiving prayer of Jonah ends with the powerful assertion that ' _____ is of the Lord'.
- M. Jonah's statement that 'salvation is of the Lord' also testifies to his own experience of the Lord's mercy and _____. Jonah had fled from the Lord, but still the Lord saved him.

IV. God Grants Jonah a Second Chance (2.10)

- A. As soon as Jonah finishes his prayer, the Lord speaks to the fish, which _____ Jonah upon the dry land.
- B. The Lord is moved to action by Jonah's prayer. Apparently, God believes that Jonah is now ready to go to _____.

V. Conclusion to Jonah 1-2

The first half of the book of Jonah (chs. 1–2) begins with a word from God and ends with a word from God. First, God commands Jonah to go to Nineveh (1.1), but Jonah disobeys; and second, God commands the big fish to regurgitate Jonah (2.10), and the fish obeys. Between these two commands from God, we follow the flight of the rebellious Jonah as he descends into the depths of despair and as God raises him up. The first half of the book concludes with the grace of God being extended to Jonah.

HANDOUT 4

A REPENTANT CITY AND A MERCIFUL GOD: JONAH 3.1-10

I. Introduction

After delivering Jonah from the belly of the fish, the LORD repeats his assignment. Jonah is commanded to go to Nineveh. We hope that Jonah has been transformed by his disciplinary experience. We hope that Jonah now trusts that the LORD knows what he is doing. We hope that Jonah will now obey joyfully, even though he may not fully understand the reasons for his assignment.

II. The New Opportunity for Obedience (3.1-2)

- A. God speaks again. As soon as the great fish vomits Jonah onto the dry land, the Lord _____ to him a second time.
- B. Jonah's assignment is repeated. The command is altered just a bit, enough that we might wonder the about the _____ for the changes.
- C. As a prophet of God, Jonah does not have the option of choosing the _____ or changing the message.
- D. Without a word of _____ to the Lord, Jonah rises up and travels to Nineveh where he proclaims a message of impending doom. In essence, his message is 'The end is near'.

III. The Short Sermon (3.3-4)

- A. Jonah goes to Nineveh. Like before, Jonah does not speak to God; he only acts. Therefore, we have no indication of his _____ towards his assignment.
- B. The words, 'exceedingly great city', carry a double meaning. The phrase could just as well be translated 'a great city _____ to God'.
- C. The Jews considered _____ to be the 'city of God', but they also proclaimed that 'The earth belongs to the Lord and all that fills it, the world and all who dwell in it' (Pss. 24.1; 50.12; 89.11).
- D. It is surprising that Jonah does not use the standard prophetic messenger formula, '_____'. In fact, he does not mention the name of the Lord at all.
- E. The message of Jonah could be translated, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will turn around', or even 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be _____'!

IV. The Amazing Turn (3.5-9)

- A. Nineveh repents. After only one day, the entire city of Nineveh _____ God and repents of their wickedness. God's word is powerful to change lives.
- B. Jonah's preaching generates a _____ response from the people of Nineveh.
- C. The king of Nineveh repents. When word of the events reaches the king of Nineveh, he lays aside his _____ and sits in sackcloth and ashes.
- D. The king proclaims a fast. The decree of the king lends authority and legitimacy to the _____.
- E. Violence is confessed. The king orders the people to 'cry mightily' to God and to 'turn' from their _____ and violence.
- F. In his initial call to Jonah, the Lord had characterized Nineveh as an evil city, but now the king's decree describes the sin of Nineveh with a more specific term – _____.
- G. The king's edict of repentance applies to the Ninevites and to the Israelites and to _____. In our day, violence is rampant.
- H. The king hopes for mercy. The repentance of the Ninevites is aimed at moving God to pity so that he will change his mind and not _____ the city.

V. The God of Grace (3.10)

- A. The Lord repents. The _____ of Nineveh makes a deep impression upon the Lord. In a surprising turn of events, he responds to their change of heart with his own change of heart, choosing not to bring upon them the judgment that he had threatened.
- B. While Nineveh was not 'turned over' to destruction, it was 'turned over' in its attitudes and commitments. The Lord is free to express his anger toward human wickedness, but he is also free to change his anger to _____.

VI. Conclusion

If we should find ourselves facing the displeasure of God (cf. the churches of Revelation 2–3), we must follow the example of Nineveh, turning to God with all of our heart and believing that God will forgive and restore us to his fellowship. Also, God's mercy upon Nineveh should encourage the Church to be involved deeply in mission and evangelism both locally and globally. We must believe that even the most wicked and depraved people can be redeemed by the grace of God.

HANDOUT 5

JONAH AND THE GOD OF GRACE:

JONAH 4.1-11

I. Introduction

The concern of the story is not the Ninevites' evil, rather it is Jonah's misguided views towards God. In chapter 4, Jonah finally reveals his long hidden motive for fleeing his assignment, and the conflict between God and Jonah is pushed into the foreground.

II. Angry with God (4.1-5)

- A. The Lord's forgiveness of Nineveh _____ Jonah greatly and he is very angry.
- B. Although he is angry that Nineveh is saved, Jonah knows that the fate of Nineveh lies in the hands of the _____; therefore, Jonah's anger is really directed at the Lord.
- C. Jonah wants God to smite the enemy; he wants _____ to prevail, but God hears Nineveh's prayers of repentance and his heart is touched by the humility of the Ninevites who fasted and prayed and mourned over their violence.
- D. Jonah knew that when he preached in Nineveh, the people would have an opportunity to be saved, but if he did not preach, they would have no basis for repentance. That is why he _____ from his assignment.
- E. Jonah himself had preached about the _____ and mercy of God.
- F. Jonah is more _____ with God's punishment than with God's mercy.
- G. Jesus' parables tell us that established religion prefers _____ over mercy, because justice is safe, predictable, controllable, and easily understood. Mercy is unpredictable, ambiguous, and leads to change.
- H. Like many of us, Jonah was resistant to _____. He was not open to what God wanted to do in Nineveh!
- I. Jonah is so angry that he prays to _____. He no longer desires to live in a world where his enemies are offered redemption and where evil is so quickly pardoned.
- J. Even though Jonah is clearly in the wrong, we must appreciate the _____ that God gives him to complain.
- K. Jonah is not the first to _____ with God. We must wrestle with God in order to know God and to be like God.

- L. God values Jonah as a _____, not just as an instrument of prophecy. God takes seriously Jonah and his theological concerns.
- M. Jonah does not wish to _____ the dialogue with God, nor does he seem to be appreciative of God's personal attention.

III. God Defends His Grace (4.6-11)

- A. Jonah continues to resist any dialogue with God, but God _____ in reaching out to Jonah.
- B. In order to get to the root of Jonah's anger, God provides _____ to Jonah and then takes away that comfort.
- C. The large leaves of the plant shade Jonah from the _____ of the sun and he rejoices 'greatly' because of the plant.
- D. Once again God questions the _____ of Jonah's anger. Jonah's silence and his wish to die are way of avoiding his anger and frustration.
- E. Jonah's evil attitude toward the _____ of God demonstrates that the presence of charismatic gifts such as prophecy does not guarantee complete spiritual maturity.
- F. If Jonah is deeply concerned about a plant, then how can he _____ the Lord for being concerned about a city of 120,000 persons and their livestock?
- G. The inhabitants of Nineveh are characterized by the Lord as 'human beings who do not know their right hand from their left', a description that may refer to the young children but which more likely describes figuratively the Ninevites lack of _____ in the laws of God and their lack of spiritual discernment.
- H. The final words of the book of Jonah – 'and many _____' – are puzzling. The Lord's mention of the cattle would remind Jonah of the violent Assyrian (Ninevite) incursions into Israel.
- I. If God cares for the sparrow, the raven, the grass, and the cattle, how much more does he _____ for his people!

IV. The Message of Jonah

- A. God's gracious response to _____ has long been regarded as a dominant theme of the story.
- B. The only motif that is present in every part of the story is the _____ between Jonah and God.
- C. The real issue is Jonah's theological struggle with _____. Jonah, though an adult, is undergoing a re-education, a painful process of theological formation (sanctification), and he rebels against the yoke.

V. Conclusion

The book of Jonah focuses on the interrelationships between Jonah, the LORD, the sailors and the Ninevites, yet the beauty of the story is that we may find ourselves in the place of any of the characters at a given time. In the end, we come face to face with the God of amazing Grace.